

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown in the following claim listing. The claim listing replaces all prior claim versions and claim listings in the application:

1. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:
 - a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;
 - a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;
 - a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion positioned outside said chamber prior to said inflation fluid being introduced into said container, said first portion being deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid when introduced into said container, said rupturable closure member having a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and
 - an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said second portion.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said disk is circular and has a central dome-shaped portion comprising said first portion.

4. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said initiator, when actuated, shears said first portion from said second portion and said inflation fluid acting on said second portion causes said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of inflation fluid from said container through said passage.

5. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 4 wherein said second portion blocks said passage prior to petaling away from said support and opening said passage.

6. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 3 wherein said initiator has a base supported by a portion of said container, and said support comprises a hollow member having a second end opposite said open first end supported by said base, said initiator extending into said hollow member.

7. (Previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said rupturable closure member is plastically deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and is work hardened due to the plastic deformation.

8. (Previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said rupturable closure member has a third portion encircling said second portion and further including a connection between said third portion and said container.

9. (Previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said open first end of said support includes a circular rim defining an opening into said chamber, said rim having a surface engaging said closure member.

10. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:
an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion spaced from an open first end of said support prior to said inflation fluid being introduced into said container, said first portion being deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid when introduced into said container, said

rupturable closure member having a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said ring-shaped portion.

11. (Canceled).

12. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 wherein said disk is circular and has a central dome-shaped portion comprising said first portion.

13. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 wherein said initiator, when actuated, shears said first portion from said second portion and said inflation fluid acting on said second portion causes said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of inflation fluid from said container through said passage.

14. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 13 wherein said second portion blocks said passage prior to petaling away from said support and opening said passage.

15. (Previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 wherein said rupturable closure member is plastically deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and is work hardened due to the plastic deformation.

16. (Previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 wherein said rupturable closure member has a third portion encircling said second portion and further including a connection between said third portion and said container.

17. (Original) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 wherein said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is maintained inflated for at least seven seconds.

Claims 18-22 (Canceled).

23. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said inflation fluid consists essentially of helium.

24. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

25. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 3, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said dome-shaped first portion to reverse said dome-shaped first portion and shear said dome-shaped first portion from said second portion.

26. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 9, wherein said circular rim helps define a periphery of said first portion where said closure member engages said circular rim.

27. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 9, wherein said first portion extends into said chamber through said opening.

28. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein said inflation fluid consists essentially of helium.

29. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

30. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 12, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said dome-shaped first portion to reverse said dome-shaped first portion and shear said dome-shaped first portion from said second portion.

31. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a dome-shaped first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a ring-shaped second portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber, second portion blocking flow of said inflation fluid through said passage; and

an initiator that, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid acting on said second portion to cause said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of said inflation fluid from said container through said passage when said first portion is sheared from said second portion.

32. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 8, wherein said connection between said third portion and said container comprises a weld connection.

33. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 16, wherein said connection between said third portion and said container comprises a weld connection.

34. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said support includes a side wall having an inner surface defining said chamber and an opposite outer surface, said inflation fluid flowing around said support adjacent said outer surface and through said outlet passage when said closure member is ruptured.

35. (Previously presented) Apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein said support includes a side wall having an inner surface defining said chamber and an opposite outer surface, said inflation fluid flowing around said support adjacent said outer surface and through said outlet passage when said closure member is ruptured.

36. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion, said second portion being deformed outside of said chamber by the pressure of said inflation fluid, said first and second portions having a substantially flat configuration prior to said inflation fluid being introduced into said container; and an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member.

37. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, shears said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid acting

on said second portion and causing said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of inflation fluid from said container through said passage.

38. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber, said rupturable closure member having a third portion encircling said second portion and further including a connection between said third portion and said container; and

an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said second portion.

39. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

40. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, shears said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid acting on said second portion and causing said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of inflation fluid from said container through said passage.

41. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member,

said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber, said rupturable closure member having a third portion encircling said second portion and further including a connection between said third portion and said container; and

an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said ring-shaped portion.

42. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

43. (Previously presented) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member, said support including a side wall having an inner surface and an opposite outer surface, said inner surface defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid flowing around said support adjacent said outer surface and through said outlet passage when said closure member is ruptured.

44. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member, said support including a side wall having an inner surface and an opposite outer surface, said inner surface defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid flowing around said support adjacent said outer surface and through said outlet passage when said closure member is ruptured.

Claims 45-47 (Canceled).

48. (New) An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage, said rupturable closure member having an outer periphery secured to a first support member;

a second support member centrally located relative to said rupturable closure member and defining a chamber into which a central portion of said rupturable closure member is deformed by the pressure of the inflation fluid; and

an initiator that, when actuated, ruptures said closure member, said initiator being located in said chamber.

49. (New) Apparatus as defined in claim 48, wherein an annular space is defined between said first and second support members, said rupturable closure member having an annular portion encircling said central portion and deformed into said annular space by the pressure of the inflation fluid.